the **rhythm road**

American Music Abroad

Latin
Jazz 101

jazz at lincoln center

Contents

Jazz at Lincoln Center created this publication to provide an introduction to Latin jazz. You'll find a history of the genre, an overview of the unique percussion section that drives the music, and profiles of some of the legendary figures of Latin jazz. Also included are a selection of recommended recordings, readings, and videos for your further exploration.

Latin Jazz

A mostly non-vocal music based on traditional Latin rhythms, which incorporates the structures and practices of modern jazz with an emphasis on the instrumental soloist and improvisation. While Afro-Cuban jazz is based on traditional Cuban rhythms, Latin jazz by definition includes any and all musics from Latin America, the Caribbean, and certain countries in Europe.

A Brief History

Latin jazz is not a subcategory of jazz like bebop, big band swing, or cool. It has its own unique history, performance practices, and musical concepts. Just as jazz emerged from New Orleans and developed into a national music with diverse styles, Latin jazz grew from its roots in Europe, Africa, and the Americas into a strong musical tree with its own stylistic branches.

Jelly Roll Morton circa early 1920s.

Courtesy of the Frank Driggs Collection.

Jazz pioneer Jelly Roll Morton understood the impact of what he called the Latin tinge at a time when jazz was still a new word for most Americans. He was referring to a specific rhythm that could be heard in early New Orleans jazz. Morton's Latin tinge was directly related to the habanera, a style of music that was turning up in the dance halls of Havana, Cuba, around the same time. And just as jazz musicians in New Orleans were feeling the pulse of the Latin tinge, Havana society bands were listening to new American forms like jazz and ragtime. Music, like the goods and services that crossed between these two port cities, passed freely through the Americas. Cross-pollination, even in the infancy of these styles, was inevitable. The 1940s was a pivotal period in the development of Latin jazz, specifically Afro-Cuban jazz. Different dance styles and different schools of jazz intersected in the careful hands of trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Mario Bauza. Both musicians were busy working in the jazz clubs of New York's 52nd Street and in the city's famed dance halls, including the Palladium, Roseland Ballroom, and the Apollo Theater in Harlem, which had long featured jazz and Caribbean acts. Gillespie and Bauza were bandmates in the Chick Webb and Cab Calloway orchestras, where they became lifelong friends. When Gillespie became interested in Cuban rhythms and began to look for a conga drummer for his own group, it was Bauza who recommended the Cuban percussionist Luciano Chano Pozo. Gillespie and Pozo became fast friends and collaborators, co-writing many Afro-Cuban jazz standards, including "Manteca."

L to R: James Moody, Chano Pozo, and Dizzy Gillespie, circa 1948.

Courtesy of the Frank Driggs Collection.

La Conga club, New York City.

Courtesy of the Frank Driggs Collection.

Mario Bauza circa 1975.
Courtesy of Martin Cohen.

Around the same time, new music was also being developed by Machito and the Afro-Cubans, a Latin big band directed by Bauza that featured an array of first-class arrangers, including pianist Rene Hernandez. "Tanga," a piece written by Bauza in 1943 and arranged by Hernandez, is widely considered the first Latin jazz composition. It was so popular with dancers that it was often used to pacify the crowds when tensions threatened to get out of hand on the dance floor. More importantly, "Tanga" became a vehicle for extensive soloing and brought many great jazz musicians to the stage to sit in.

Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill's "Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite" was the first composition to combine Latin rhythms, solo improvisation, and sophisticated jazz arranging.

The multi-movement piece was commissioned by Norman Granz, who produced the Jazz at the Philharmonic concert series. Granz gave O'Farrill permission to write "whatever he wanted," as the composer once recalled, and Chico had the musical training and the temperament to do it. The resulting work, featuring the legendary bebop pioneer Charlie Parker, stands as one of the masterpieces of 20th century music.

Latin jazz reached its peak popularity with the mambo craze of the late 1940s/early 1950s, inspired by the legendary percussionist and bandleader Tito Puente, among others. Latinized rhythms have since been used to varying degrees of success by a range of jazz artists from Stan Kenton to Peggy Lee, Duke Ellington to Chick Corea, and nearly everyone in between. From the jazz perspective, some of the most notable experiments of the 1950s were the recordings of pianist George Shearing, featuring bassist Al

Mongo Santamaria and Cal Tjader circa 1960.
Courtesy of Martin Cohen.

McKibbon, percussionists Candido Camero and Willie Bobo, and West Coast vibraphonist Cal Tjader, who became one of the most influential Latin jazz performers of the era. Mongo Santamaria, one of Tjader's

percussionists, would also influence generations of young percussionists, including Nuyorican (a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent) trumpeter and conguero Jerry Gonzalez. His group, the Fort Apache Band, set the standard for integrating true, folkloric-based Afro-Cuban rhythms into the modern small group jazz vocabulary. The Fort Apache Band defined the sound of Latin jazz throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

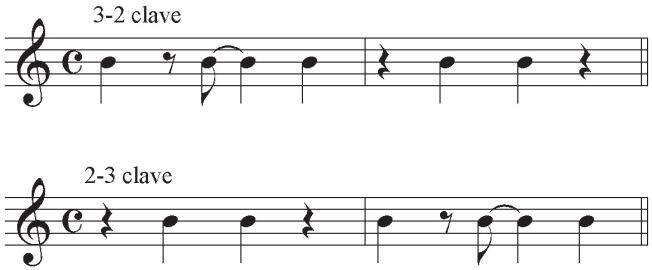
Eddie Palmieri circa 1960.
Courtesy of Martin Cohen.

One of the most important innovators of the 1960s through the 1980s was Nuyorican pianist, composer, and arranger Eddie Palmieri, whose writing and performance style reflected a heartfelt commitment to both modern jazz and Latin dance rhythms, especially salsa. During this same time, Irakere, a Cuban group led by pianist Chucho Valdes, popularized a new hybrid of Afro-Cuban music and jazz/funk that quickly became the new sound of Latin jazz worldwide. And in Puerto Rico, Batacumbele, a cooperative band run by the island's top musicians, including trombonist Papo Vazquez and pianist Eric Figueroa, brought into the mix indigenous Puerto Rican rhythms like the *bomba* and the *plena.*

Since the late 1990s, with the emergence of a young generation of Latin musicians, including pianist Danilo Perez (Panama), saxophonist David Sanchez (Puerto Rico), pianist Adrian Iaies (Argentina), and pianist Chano Dominguez (Spain), Latin jazz has become truly pan-Latin, incorporating elements of indigenous musics from throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe.

What is the Clave?

Latin music is largely governed by a two-measure pattern called the clave. This is one of the essential differences between jazz and Latin music. The clave is literally the key to Latin jazz; it creates the essential tension and release that propels the music.



The idea of tension and release can be found in all great art. It goes by many names: protagonist/antagonist, conflict/resolution, yin/yang. One way of creating musical tension is through syncopation, the accenting of unexpected beats or the avoidance of expected beats. Syncopation is like missing a step or changing the rhythm of your walk in mid-stream — it leaves you with a feeling of surprise or unbalance. In jazz, syncopation helps to create the tension and release of swing. In Afro-Cuban jazz, tension and release is created and maintained by the clave. Like swing, the clave propels the music in a forward motion that is especially conducive to dancing.

The clave is a five-beat pattern played over two measures. The first measure stresses beats one, two-and-a-half, and four; the

unexpected emphasis on beats two-and-a-half and four create a sense of tension. The second measure stresses beats two and three; this half of the clave falls directly on the beat, releasing the tension and giving the music a feeling of solidity. We call this complete pattern the three-two clave. When this pattern begins on the second measure, it is called the two-three clave.

In most Latin jazz there must be a healthy respect for the clave; the melodies and improvisations must work within the clave pattern. If the melody conflicts with the clave (emphasizes downbeats on the three-side or syncopations on the two-side), the melody must be adjusted accordingly. While there are some variations to this pattern, once you have learned the basic clave you have unlocked the secret of Latin jazz.

Frank "Machito" Grillo (far right), Jose Mangual, Carlos Vidal, and Graciela Grillo, 1947.

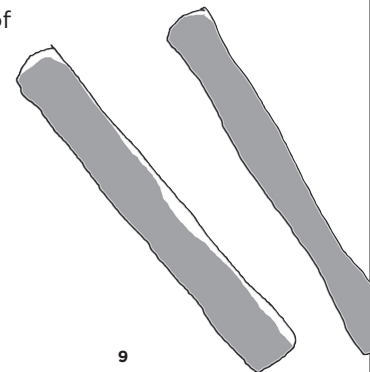
Courtesy of William Gottlieb.

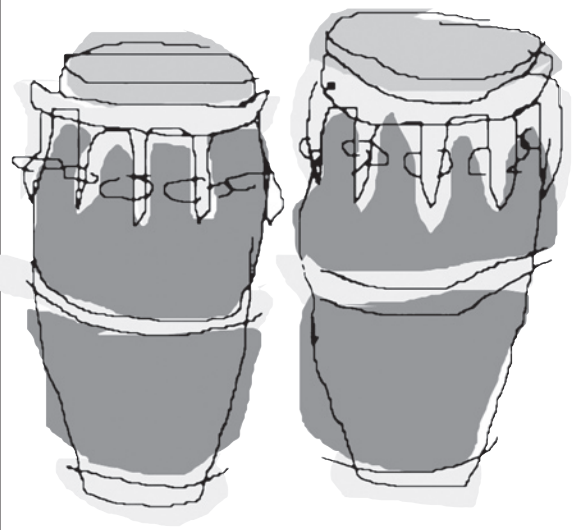
The Latin Percussion Section: Putting It All Together

Jazz does not become Latin jazz simply by adding congas to an existing jazz standard. In order for the music to become true Latin jazz, the musicians must respect the essence of the genre's indigenous roots and understand different Latin approaches to style and performance. Yet Latin jazz musicians should still embrace the fundamental harmonic sophistication and stylistic languages of modern jazz, including blues-based improvisation and a swing-centered rhythmic concept.

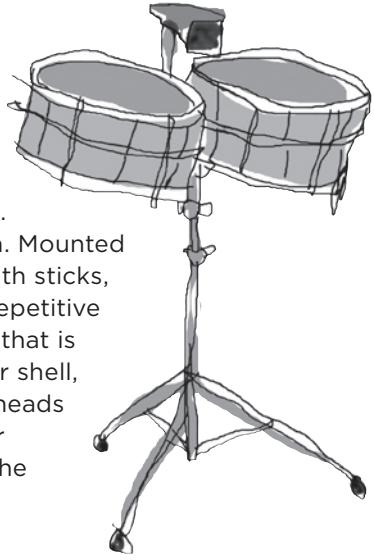
The most dense and complex aspect of Latin jazz is the rhythm section. Composers, arrangers, and performers of Latin jazz must have a working knowledge of the specific rhythms of the percussion section. Each percussion instrument plays a specific part that must interlock with the others in an ordered but swinging manner. The effect is like that of a pointillist painting; at close examination it is just a collection of dots but from a distance it becomes a contiguous and beautiful whole.

The **clave** is the heartbeat of Latin music. In addition to being a rhythmic pattern, the term clave also refers to the wooden sticks that play this central rhythm.

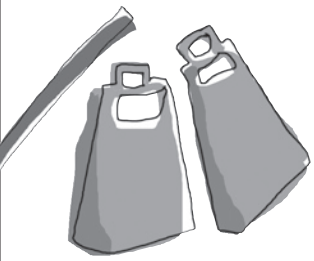




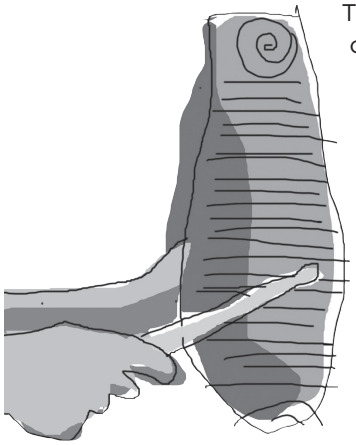
The **conga drums** emerged in the African Congo region. Their function in Latin jazz is both percussive and melodic. The small *quinto* drum is used primarily for soloing, while the mid-size conga and the larger *tumbadora* support the clave with their *tumbao* (Spanish term for the groove) pattern.



The **timbales** are a pair of tunable drums that emerged in Cuba and are descendants of the larger European tympani. They are also called paila. Mounted on a stand and played with sticks, the timbales produce a repetitive *cascara* ("shell") pattern that is performed on the side, or shell, of the drums. The drum heads and cymbals are used for accents and to support the groove.

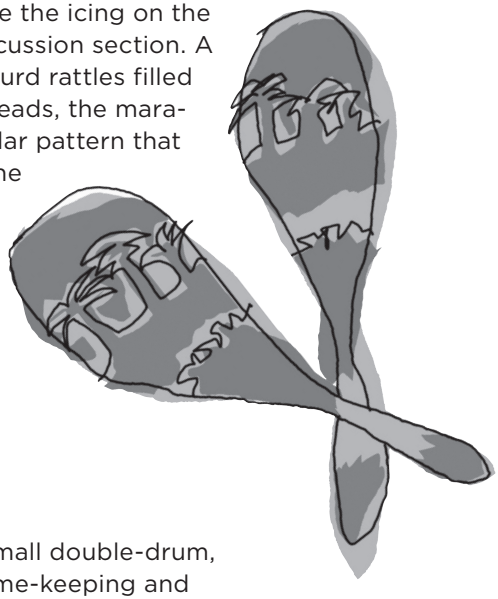


The piercing double bell of the **cowbell**, or *agogo*, is the centerpiece of many African and Afro-Latin musics. In Afro-Cuban jazz, the cowbell rhythm is closely related to the cascara pattern of the timbale, and it serves as a constant reference to the clave.

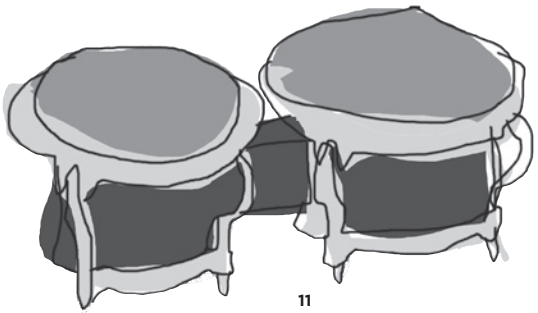


The **guiro** is a scraper made of a dried gourd. It's played by rubbing a stick over the grooves etched into the side of the gourd. It's used more for coloring than timekeeping.

The **maracas** are the icing on the cake of the percussion section. A pair of dried gourd rattles filled with seeds or beads, the maracas play a circular pattern that complements the polyrhythms of the percussion section.



The **bongo**, a small double-drum, fulfills both a time-keeping and improvisational role. The two drums, usually situated between the calves of a seated musician, are tuned a fourth apart and their short, syncopated patterns offer a counterpoint to the clave.



Glossary of Latin Styles

Afro-Cuban Jazz:
a clave-based, mostly non-vocal music with a heavy emphasis on the rhythms of Cuban folkloric music that integrates modern jazz practice and style.

Habanera:
this Cuban dance of Spanish origin was the first Latin style to have a profound influence on American music; it is also the rhythmic foundation of the tango.

Latin Jazz:
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Latin Popular Music:
a mostly vocal music for the popular market with an emphasis on both dance and the personality of the artist; there is little-to-no instrumental improvisation and no emphasis on modern jazz practice or style.

Mambo:
a medium-to-fast dance style developed in Cuba by the brothers Orestes and Israel "Cachao" Lopez as an outgrowth of the *danzon*, a style of music and dance originated in Cuba in the late 19th century. The mambo became an international craze during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Merengue:
a fast, two-step dance rhythm from the Dominican Republic. Although it dates back to the early 19th century, merengue remains extremely popular today and can be heard in dance clubs throughout the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Rumba:
a form of song and dance popular among the dockworkers of Cuba at the turn of the century. Performed by drums and vocal groups, the rumba has stronger African influences than the country-tinged *son*. The rumba is different from the rhumba, a form of *son* popular in the United States in the 1930s.

Salsa:
not a true musical form but an umbrella marketing term used to describe a Cuban-rooted popular dance rhythm created by Latinos in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s.

Samba:
a fast, popular rhythm from Brazil based on the choros of the late 1800s and early 1900s; widely associated with the week of Carnival and its celebrations, this form of music and dance endures as friendly, neighborhood samba schools compete annually for prizes and recognition.

Son:
a quintessential Afro-Cuban hybrid style, son originated in the Oriente (easternmost) province of Cuba and emerged in Havana around WWI. It was the first popular dance rhythm of the working class and the poor in Cuba and it is the foundation of what came to be known as salsa.

Tango:
a dance that emerged in Buenos Aires, Argentina in the late 19th century, it is a blend of the habanera and European and indigenous styles. It was originally performed by trios comprised of guitar, violin, and flute, but since the turn of the century the quintessential tango sound has become that of the *bandoneon*, a button squeezebox invented in Germany as a portable harmonium.

Important Figures of Latin Jazz

Mario Bauza

Born in Havana in 1911, multi-instrumentalist Mario Bauza began studying music as a young boy, eventually joining the Havana Symphony at age 16. In 1926, Bauza came to the United States with the orchestra of Antonio Maria Romeu. He fell in love with Harlem and jazz and came to stay in New York in 1930. He played with Noble Sissle, Fletcher Henderson, and Don Redman, became the musical director of Chick Webb's big band, and was a member of Cab Calloway's orchestra. In time, he joined forces with the great Cuban bandleader Frank "Machito" Grillo, his childhood friend and brother-in-law, forming the legendary orchestra Machito and the Afro-Cubans. Under Bauza's musical guidance, the Machito orchestra became a breeding ground for the first experiments in Latin jazz, combining great jazz soloists with a true Latin rhythm section. Bauza is generally credited as a primary catalyst in the creation of Latin jazz.

Dizzy Gillespie, 1979.
Courtesy of Frank Stewart/ Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Dizzy Gillespie

Trumpeter, bandleader, and composer John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie was born on October 21, 1917, in Cheraw, South Carolina. He received his first music lessons from his father and later studied music theory as a young man in North Carolina. After moving to New York City in 1937, Gillespie worked with many well-known bands and took part in jam sessions at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem. There, he and musicians such as Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, and Charlie Parker experimented with a new style of jazz that later became known as bebop. Through his collaborations with Machito, Chano Pozo, Mario Bauza, and Chico O'Farrill, he helped to introduce Latin American rhythms to modern jazz. His Latin-tinged "A Night in Tunisia" and "Manteca" are jazz standards. Gillespie's bold trumpet playing, inspired teachings, and fun-loving personality earned him the affection of fellow musicians and audiences alike.

Chico O'Farrill and his orchestra, 1995.
Courtesy of Terry Bloom.

Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill

Mario Bauza may have brought together Latin rhythms and jazz, but Chico O'Farrill gave the new music its most sophisticated moments. Born in Havana in 1922, Chico was slated to be a lawyer but fell in love with jazz, especially big bands, during his high school years. After moving to New York in his early twenties, Chico immediately found work as a staff arranger for clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman, penning one of his hits "Undercurrent Blues." Chico was the first writer with a thorough understanding of jazz harmony and orchestration and an intrinsic knowledge of folkloric Afro-Cuban rhythms. Coupled with his brilliant composing and arranging talents, he became the first Afro-Cuban jazz musician to write extended, multi-movement suites for the genre, including his masterpiece "The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite."

Machito

Frank Raul "Machito" Grillo was born February 16, 1912, in Tampa, Florida. Raised in Cuba, Machito, along with Miguelito Valdes and Desi Arnaz (of "I Love Lucy" fame), was one of the most beloved Cuban singers and bandleaders of the 1940s and 1950s. With his brother-in-law, Mario Bauza, as musical director, he formed Machito and the Afro-Cubans in 1941. The orchestra, which collaborated with such important musicians as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Flip Phillips, Chico O'Farrill, and Buddy Rich, became the single most important ensemble in the development of Latin jazz. A great humanitarian, Machito maintained his band throughout the 1960s and into the 1980s until his death in 1984.

Tito Puente

Born in Spanish Harlem in 1923, Ernest Anthony "Tito" Puente was hailed as the last of the Mambo Kings. A Juilliard-trained musician, Puente was a triple threat: multi-instrumentalist, arranger, and composer. His stage presence was extraordinary and his various ensembles always featured the finest Latin jazz musicians. By the 1950s, Puente had established himself as one of the central figures of the New York dance scene. His reign at the famed Palladium Ballroom quickly made him one of the most famous bandleaders in the history of Latin jazz. A beloved figure throughout the world, his commitment to Latin jazz was foremost in taking the music to the farthest reaches of the globe.

Tito Puente circa 1980.
Courtesy of Martin Cohen.

Selected Listening

Ray Barreto: Latino Con Soul
(Universal 523713, 1994)

Mario Bauza: Messidor's Finest V. 1: Mario Bauza
(Rounder MSDR15842, 1997)

Dizzy Gillespie: Cubana Be
(His Master's Voice B9668, 1948)

Jerry Gonzalez: Rhumba Para Monk
(Sunnyside 1036, 1995)

Irakere: Irakere
(Columbia 35655, 1979)

Machito and The Afro-Cubans: Kenya: Afro-Cuban Jazz
(Blue Note 22668, 2000)

Arturo O'Farrill: Bloodlines
(Milestone 9294, 1999)

Chico O'Farrill: Carambola
(Milestones MCD-93082-2, 2000)

Eddie Palmieri: Mozambique
(Tico 1126, 1965)

Danilo Perez: Panamonk
(Impulse! 190, 1996)

Tito Puente: Dance Mania
(RCA International, 1958)

Gonzalo Rubalcaba: Inner Voyage
(Blue Note 99241, 1999)

Mongo Santamaria: Afro Blue: The Picante Collection
(Concord 4781, 1997)

Cal Tjader and Eddie Palmieri: El Sonido Nuevo
(Verve 519 812, 1993)

Papo Vazquez: At the Point, Vols. 1 and 2
(Cubop 15 & 16, 1999)

Suggested Reading

Descarga Cubana: Ciudad de La Habana
by Leonardo Acosta
(Ediciones UniUn, 2000) In Spanish

Diccionario de Jazz Latino
by Nat Chediak, Carlos Galilea, and Fernando Trueba
(Madrid: Fundacion Autor, 1998) In Spanish

Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz
by Isabelle Leymarie
(New York: Continuum Press, 2002)

The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin Music on the United States
by John Storm Roberts
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Afro-Cuban Jazz
by Scott Yanow
(San Francisco: Miller Freeman, 2000)

Suggested Videos

Calle 54
(Miramax Home Entertainment, 2003)

Dizzy Gillespie and The United Nations Orchestra Live at the Royal Festival Hall
(Pioneer Video, 2001)

Jam Miami: A Celebration of Latin Jazz
(Image Entertainment, 2003)

Roots of Rhythm
(New Video Group, 2001)

Tito Puente: The Mambo King
(UniRmm Records, 1993)

Jazz at Lincoln Center

Jazz at Lincoln Center is a not-for-profit arts organization dedicated to jazz. With the world-renowned Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performance, education, and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, weekly national radio and television programs, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, a jazz appreciation curriculum for children, advanced training through the Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses and student and educator workshops. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, Chairman of the Board Lisa Schiff, President & CEO Derek E. Gordon, Executive Director Katherine E. Brown and Jazz at Lincoln Center board and staff, Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce hundreds of events during its 2005-06 season. In October 2004, Jazz at Lincoln Center opened Frederick P. Rose Hall - the first-ever performance, education, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz. For more information, visit www.jalc.org.

Education Mission

Jazz at Lincoln Center is committed to educating the public, especially young people, about the rich heritage of jazz, its great works and musicians, and the relationship between jazz and other disciplines. Educational programming is integral to our philosophy; all activities and publications reflect and enhance this central mission and are coordinated with concert and tour programming.

Our educational programs and publications guide students, educators, musicians, and the general public in playing, teaching, and appreciating the richness and diversity of jazz music. By engaging students at every level, from pre-kindergarten to adults, Jazz at Lincoln Center aims to make jazz accessible to audiences all around the globe.

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